Welcome to the very first issue of *Equity in Action*, a quarterly newsletter designed to keep you informed about the equity work in the Leadership Institute of Riverside County. In this issue, we will highlight the third annual Excellence Through Equity Conference held in September 2016, and one of the keynote speakers who made this event both inspiring and challenging. We will invite you to a session on equitable instruction by another of the conference presenters, Dr. Chris Emdin as well as two other upcoming events. Finally, we will introduce you to the Blueprint for Action, a document which provides guidance on working with African American students in Riverside County.

At the third annual Excellence Through Equity Conference, held on September 15–16, 2016, in Indian Wells, we welcomed more than 600 community and education leaders, all focused on the mission of providing equitable learning for all students. Outstanding conference speakers such as Tavis Smiley, Chris Emdin, Jeff Duncan-Andrade and others ignited our passion for authentic equity in our schools, and challenged us to make a deep commitment to the actions needed to achieve it. Please take a moment to relive the conference as you review your colleague’s twitter posts using this link: http://www.rcoe.us/leadership-institute/excellence-through-equity-conference-2016/. You may also access the presentation slides of our keynote and breakout presenters using this link: http://www.rcoe.us/leadership-institute/excellence-through-equity-conference-2016/workshops/.

Thank you for attending and making this event a great success!
TAVIS SMILEY  
A Keynote Speech to Remember

From his celebrated conversations with world figures to his work to inspire the next generation of leaders, Tavis Smiley—broadcaster, author, publisher, advocate, and philanthropist—is an influential voice for change. We were privileged to hear Tavis share a compelling message on the ideals of equity at the third annual Excellence Through Equity Conference in September. Melissa Bazanos, Director of Assessment and Accountability at the Riverside County Office of Education shared the following ideas from Tavis Smiley’s keynote presentation:

- We all want to one day live in a nation that is as good as its promise.
- There is a gap between the ideals that we profess and the ideas that we practice. How do we do a better job of matching ideas and ideals?
- How does a nation that scarcely believes in equality ever embrace the notion of equity?
- Are we about equality and fairness or about equity and justice?
- Our roots determine our routes. Roots: What are we grounded in?
- About leadership: You can’t lead people if you don’t love people. You can’t save people if you don’t serve people.
- About love: Everyone is worthy…just because.

Smiley’s words challenge us to keep before us the moral purpose of the equity work we do on behalf of children.

Our collective efforts can create a nation that is, indeed, as good as its promise.

CHRIS EMDIN  
Returns to Riverside County

Back by Popular Demand Dr. Chris Emdin will be making a return visit to the Inland Empire on Tuesday, January 10, 2017, to work with teachers and administrators. His day-long session will focus on Teaching and Learning from a Student Standpoint: The 7 Cs of Reality Pedagogy.

Dr. Emdin says, “In an age where terms like ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘cultural relevance’ have been littered across the educational landscape, teachers and administrators still have a challenging time implementing instructional approaches/tools that meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population.” Dr. Emdin will explore the current educational buzz words, bridge the divides between theory and practice, and provide tangible tools for educators on improving their practice.

We look forward to welcoming Dr. Emdin back to Riverside County.

Online registration is available at http://rcoe.k12oms.org/.
An important aspect of equity and opportunity related to our region is the achievement of our African American students. Data indicates that, proportionally, many African American students are experiencing the least amount of success in our schools. This is especially true for African American male students. In 2013, the LIRC launched the Riverside County African American Achievement Initiative (RCAAAI) to tackle this problem. The work of the initiative is guided by findings from local, state, and national research. Local African American student feedback from focus groups and individual interviews have also played an important role in selecting and implementing strategies relevant to the needs of African American students in our county. We’ve learned much about the successes and challenges of our students by listening to them and their families.

After reviewing all data and research, the RCAAAI identified three focus areas, all aligned to the state priorities to be addressed in Local Control and Accountability Plans: Student Engagement, High-Quality Instruction, and Parent Engagement. To learn more, you can access the Blueprint for Action using this link: http://www.rcoe.us/newsroom/files/2015/04/Blueprint-for-Action-Booklet.pdf.

The work continues...

AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL ACADEMY

This three-part training is designed for newly formed or existing district and site-based African American Parent Advisory Councils (AAPAC).

Each session will provide AAPAC members with resources that support their council goals. Dates for the Academy:

- October 7, 2016
- December 9, 2016
- February 10, 2017

EQUITY TEAM INSTITUTE

District/site teams will work collaboratively to deepen their understanding and develop skills, strategies, and resources needed to support students from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Site and/or district teams will work to design a plan to ensure that systems are in place to support an equitable learning environment for all students. Guest facilitators will include:

- Rose Owens-West, Region IX Equity Assistance Center, Oakland, CA
- Joaquin Noguera, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA
- Carolyn Kaneda, Teaching Excellence Network (TEN), Oakland, CA

Dates for the Institute:

- November 3, 2016
- January 19, 2017
- March 9, 2017
- May 18, 2017

We look forward to continuing our support for your efforts towards creating an equitable learning environment for all students.